

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 DHA-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 EB-07
OMB-01 TRSE-00 ARA-10 AID-05 EA-07 CU-02 /133 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6869
INFO AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT LOUIS 0774

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PGOV PDIP EFIN EFIS EAID MP UR AS IMF IBRD
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - JULY 22

REF: PORT LOUIS 751

SUMMARY: PORT LOUIS 0773 (NOTAL) PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF
THIS CABLE. END SUMMARY

1. LE MAURICIEN, AN AFTERNOON PORT LOUIS NEWSPAPER, MADE
THE MAURITIAN READER AWARE OF SOME "EXTRAORDINARY" DECLARATIONS
MADE IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE FRENCH MONTHLY "LE MONDE
DIPLOMATIQUE" THIS MONTH BY HERVE MASSON, GURU OF THE
MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM), AND SECRETARY GENERAL
BERENGER. THEIR STATEMENTS SO UPSET THE MAURICIEN'S
EDITOR, LINDSAY RIVIERE, THAT HE CALLED IN AN EDITORIAL
FOR "VERY SERIOUS" EXPLANATIONS OF THESE REMARKS BY THE
MMM LEADERSHIP. AMONG OTHER THINGS MASSON, WHO WAS A
FOUNDER OF THE MMM AND IS NOW THE PARTY'S CHIEF IDEOLOGUE
AND NEWSPAPER EDITORIALIST, SAID THAT "IN CASE OF AGGRESSION
OR ARMED PRESSURE" AGAINST A MMM GOVERNMENT IN MAURITIUS,
THE PARTY WOULD BE OBLIGED TO TURN TO THE SOVIET UNION FOR
HELP. HE ALSO SAID HIS PARTY'S INTENTION WAS TO MAKE OF
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MAURITIUS "A LITTLE CUBA IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, WHILE AVOIDING
A DEVIATION TOWARD CLASSICAL SOVIET COMMUNISM." HE ADDED
THAT IT IS UP TO THE WEST NOT TO THROW MAURITIUS INTO THE
ARMS OF THE EAST, AS HAPPENED IN CUBA.

2. FOR HIS PARTY IN THE SAME JOURNAL BERENGER DESCRIBED
HIS PARTY AS REPRESENTING "LE GAUCHISME", A TERM WHICH IN

FRANCE MEANS THE EXTREME LEFT. HE ALSO SAID WHILE THE MMM DOES NOT PLAN TO INSTALL A SOCIALIST SYSTEM OF THE TYPE ADVOCATED BY THE SOVIET UNION, THAT COUNTRY WILL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY WHEN THE MMM COMES TO POWER, "BECAUSE FOR THE MMM, IN THE REGION WHERE WE LIVE, THE DANGER COMES FROM ELSEWHERE, NOTABLY FROM THE U.S. AND SOUTH AFRICA." THE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE ARTICLE NOTED THAT A MMM GOVERNMENT WOULD USE DIPLOMATIC MEANS TO TAKE BACK DIEGO GARCIA, "BUT THEY COULD ALSO USE LESS ORTHODOX MEANS, SUCH AS SENDING MAURITIAN SHIPS TO BLOCKADE DIEGO GARCIA."

3. IN THE SAME ARTICLE PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT BRITAIN, FRANCE AND THE U.S. ARE ABANDONING MAURITIUS TO "EXTREMISM" AND WILL NOT WAKE UP UNTIL MAURITIUS HAS BECOME ANOTHER CUBA. HE SAID HE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY EUROPEANS DON'T LIKE MODERATES LIKE HIMSELF. ASKED IF HE INTENDS TO HOLD GENERAL ELECTIONS IN FIVE YEARS' TIME (AS CALLED FOR BY THE CONSTITUTION) RAM GAVE A SURPRISING ANSWER: "I DON'T KNOW. I CAN'T TELL YOU. I'LL SEZ."

4. MMM SHADOW FOREIGN MINISTER DE L'ESTRAC LABELLED MASSON'S REMARKS "UNACCEPTABLE" IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE NEWSPAPER WEEKEND. A MMM GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT HAVE SPECIAL RELATIONS WITH THE USSR, ALTHOUGH THE "DANGER TO A SOCIALIST MMM GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT COME FROM THE USSR," HE ADDED. MANY MMM
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MILITANTS ARE SUSPICIOUS OF THE SOVIET UNION, DON'T LIKE ITS SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AND LACK OF LIBERTIES, DE LE'ESTRAC SAID.

5. ALSO IN WEEKEND, MMM PRESIDENT JUGNAUTH SAID MASSON HAD NO RIGHT TO ACT AS FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN FOR THE PARTY. HE DENIED THERE IS ANY INTENTION TO FOLLOW THE PATH OF CUBA, TO GIVE THE USSR A SPECIAL ROLE ONCE THE MMM COMES TO POWER, OR TO ASK FOR SPECIAL HELP FROM THE SOVIETS. JUGNAUTH DOUBTED THE WESTERN POWERS WOULD BOYCOTT OR THREATEN A MMM GOVERNMENT IN MAURITIUS, SO HE FORESAW NO NEED TO CALL ON ANY OTHER POWER FOR HELP. HE EXPLAINED BERENGER'S REMARKS AS BEING A "POOR CHOICE OF WORDS." HE COULD NOT EXPLAIN WHY THE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE REPORTER HAD NOT INTERVIEWED HIM AS PARTY PRESIDENT.

6. MMM DEPUTY HARRIS RAMPHUL CALLED FOR AN URGENT MEETING OF THE PARTY'S POLITICAL BUREAU TO DISCUSS THE MASSON-BERENGER STATEMENTS. HE SAID MAURITIUS CANNOT BECOME A "A SMALL CUBA" AND HE FAVORED A POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT. HAVING LIVED FOR TWO AND A HALF YEARS IN THE SOVIET UNION, HE SAID HE KNOWS THERE IS NO FREEDOM THERE, PEOPLE LIVE

IN FEAR, RELIGION IS TRAMPLED AND SOLIDERS PATROL THE
STREETS.

7. CLEARLY EMBARRASSED BY HERVE MASSON'S REMARKS TO
"LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE," THE MMM'S LE MILITANT PUBLISHED
A STATEMENT DESCRIBING HIS REMARKS AS "PERSONAL OPINIONS"
THAT HAD NEVER BEEN APPROVED BY THE PARTY. AS FOR
BERENGER'S USE OF "GAUCHISME", THE PAPER SAID THE TERM MEANS
A FORM OF LIBERAL SOCIALISM WHICH CONTRASTS WITH THE
SOVIET MODEL.

8. THOUGH LE MILITANT DISASSOCIATED THE MMM FROM HERVE
MASSON'S REMARKS, IT HAS MADE AN EFFORT TO INTERPRET
BERENGER'S AS NOT BEING INCONSISTENT WITH PAST POLICIES
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OF THE PARTY. THE PAPER REAFFIRMED THE MMM'S DEDICATION
TO "NON-ALIGNMENT" AND HAS INSISTED THAT IT WANTS BOTH
SUPER-POWERS OUT OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. (COMMENT: IT IS
APPARENT THAT THE PARTY LEADERSHIP REALIZES THE DAMAGE
CAUSED BY MASSON'S REMARKS, WHICH EMPHASIZE THE PRO-SOVIET
IDEOLOGY OF THE MMM.) AS FOR THE THREATENED "BLOCKADE"
OF DIEGO GARCIA, LE MILITANT SAID THIS WOULD BE CARRIED
OUT BY MAURITIAN "PLEASURE CRAFT" TO AROUSE WORLD OPINION
AGAINST THE USE OF DIEGO AS A NAVAL BASE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PORT LOUIS 0774

9 LATER IN THE WEEK, THROUGH AN ARTICLE IN LE MAURICIEN, MASSON DEFENDED HIS REMARKS WITH THE EXPLANATION THAT THE CUBA HE IS TALKING ABOUT (AND WHICH MAURITIUS SHOULD COPY) IS THE CUBA OF CASTRO BEFORE HE ALIGNED THE COUNTRY WITH THE SOVIET UNION, A SORT OF "PRE-COMMUNIST" CUBA. HE WENT ON TO ACCUSE HIS CRITICS OF ENGAGING IN "HYSTERICAL ANTI-COMMUNISM," WHICH HE SAID HAS EVEN INFECTED SOME ELEMENTS OF THE MMM, BUT THEN HE PRAISED THE "POSITIVE ROLE" OF THE USSR AS THE CHAMPION OF LIBERATION IN THE THIRLD WORLD.

10. ON ANOTHER POLITICAL THEME, THE PAPERS SPECULATED ABOUT A POSSIBLE CABINET SHAKE-UP, WHICH WILL ALSO INVOLVE THE NAMING OF A NEW GOVERNOR GENERAL AND SOME AMBASSADORS. THE RUMORS ADD UP TO PAYING OFF SOME LABOR PARTY STALWARTS DEFEATED IN THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS, FINDING A SLOT FOR MMM DEFECTOR SURESH MOORBA, AND DEALING WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE LOSS OF AN ASSEMBLY SEAT SHOULD THE MMM'S SHIELA BAPPOO WIN HER SUIT AND RECOUNT PETITION. (IN LINE WITH THESE RUMORS MOORBA TOLD US THIS WEEK THAT HE EXPECTS TO BE NAMED A MINISTER WITHIN ABOUT TWO MONTHSE

11. RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS AT A JULY 19 PRESS CONFERENCE
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ON HIS RETURN FROM ABROAD, PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM SAID THE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE REPORTER HAD MISUNDERSTOOD HIM, FOR WHAT HE MEANT WAS THAT GENERAL ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD SOONER THAN IN FIVE YEARS. HE SAID HE PLANS NO IMMEDIATE CABINET RESHUFFLE. HE SAID LITTLE ABOUT HHS TALKS IN ENGLAND AND FRANCE, OTHER THAN TO AGREE THAT "SECURITY" WAS ONE OF THE TOPICS DISCUSSED. ASKED TO COMMENT ON MASSON'S REMARK ABOUT TURNING MAURITIUS INTO A "LITTLE CUBA," RAM SAID JOKINGLY: "WHY NOT A BIG CUBA? THEY HAVE 100,000 SQUARE MILES OF TERRITORY*" (THE P.M.'S REMARKS ON THE OAU SUMMIT WERE REPORTED IN PORT LOUIS 766.) RAM CONFIRMED HE HAD HAD A COMPLETE MEDICAL CHECK-UP IN ENGLAND. HE LOOKED IN GOOD HEALTH FOLLOWING HIS TWO WEEKS OF REST.

12. THE GOM RECEIVED A \$7.5 MILLION LOAN FROM THE WORLD BANK TO FINANCE PROJECTS OF THE MAUTITIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (MDB). THE 17-YEAR, 8.2 PERCENT INTEREST RATE LOAN WILL FINANCE FOREIGN EXCHANGE COMPONENTS OF MDB LOANS TO AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY THROUGH MID 1979.

13. THE GOM ALSO PURCHASED 11 MILLION SDR'S FROM THE IMF, HALF OF ITS QUOTA, TO COVER A DEFICIT IN THE BALANCE OF TRADE OWING TO LOWER THAN EXPECTED RECEIPTS FROM SUGAR.

14. WEEKEND HAD AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE COOLING OF SOVIET-MAURITIAN RELATIONS AND THE UNHAPPINESS OF LABOR PARTY LEADERS WITH SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN THIS COUNTRY. THE FAILURE OF THE USSR TO GIVE ANY SUBSTANTIAL AID, OTHER THAN SOME LOW-QUALITY FISH, WAS CITED, AS WELL AS THE SOVIET EMBASSY'S PRACTICE OF DRAWING 50,000 RUPEES EACH TIME A SOVIET SHIP VISITS, FOR SOME UNSTATED PURPOSE. RAMGOOLAM WAS DESCRIBED AS UNHAPPY WITH "RUSSIAN COLONIALISM" IN AFRICA.

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15. FOREIGN MINISTER WALTER ADDRESSED THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN-MAURITIAN INSTITUTE OF BILINGUALISM MEETING IN MAURITIUS AND REPROACHED THE MEMBERS OF OCAM FOR THEIR FAILURE TO PAY THEIR ASSESSMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE INSTITUTE. ONLY MAURITIUS HAS PAID ITS QUOTA, HAVING ADVANCED A SUM OF 650,000 FRANCS. THE INSTITUTE IS TO BE LOCATED HERE.

16. MAURITIUS NOW HAS ONE ADDITIONAL DIPLOMATIC MISSION: RAYMOND DEVIENNE PRESENTED HIS LETTERS AS HIGH COMMISSIONER TO AUSTRALIA IN CANBERRA ON JULY 20. THERE ARE NO KNOWN PLANS BY THE AUSTRALIANS TO OPEN A RESIDENT MISSION HERE. KEELEY

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Message Attributes

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Concepts: POLITICAL SUMMARIES
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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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